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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Presentation by Mr. Leonard, Professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, on the elaboration of strategic policies

1. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Leonard (Professor, Harvard University), took a place at the table.*

1 (a). **Mr. Leonard** (Professor, Harvard University) made a presentation on the elaboration of strategic policies in democratic countries, in the course of which he defined the concepts, which in his view were interdependent, of strategic policy, the conduct of public affairs and democracy.

2. **Mr. Chung** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), **Ms. Linde** (United States of America), **Mr. Ba** (Senegal), **Mr. Alom** (Bangladesh) and **Ms. Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) asked questions to which Mr. Leonard replied.

2 (a). *Mr. Leonard withdrew.*

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

Agenda item 96: Sectoral policy questions (*continued*) (A/52/139, 284, 347, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460)

(c) Food and sustainable agricultural development (A/52/132-E/1997/57, A/52/413, E/1997/73)

3. **Mr. Weibgen** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) observed that, in unanimously adopting the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, the 186 Member States that had participated in the World Food Summit had reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, the intolerability of a situation in which more than 800 million people throughout the world continued to suffer chronic hunger, and their determination to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015, a goal considered by some to be too modest. That was a minimum, feasible goal to be achieved as an immediate step. Hence the importance of moving ahead much more rapidly in reducing malnutrition.

4. It was at the country level that the major effort must be made, the Governments being responsible for creating an economic and political environment that assured the food security of their citizens. Because of the multidimensional nature of the problems, a concerted response by many government agencies and institutions would be required to facilitate the task of Governments. In that connection, FAO had undertaken to help developing countries and those with economies in transition to prepare national strategies for agricultural development up to 2010. Its field-level action was spearheaded by the Special Programme for Food Security, which aimed to increase food production and stability in the 86 low-income food-deficit countries where most of the 840 million people suffering from malnutrition lived. FAO had entered into partnership agreements with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, under which significant funds might be made available to the Special Programme at government request. FAO was also making progress in launching the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS).

5. Governments would not be able to achieve the expected results without the active involvement of civil society at large. The annual observance of World Food Day had led to all sorts of initiatives where the public sector and the private sector and the media and individuals coalesced. Over 60 countries and hundreds of television stations, for instance, had taken part in the first global television event, TeleFood, dedicated to raising people's awareness of the issues underlying food security and to mobilizing their support in the struggle against hunger and malnutrition.

6. In addition, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), responsible for the inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit, had accepted the FAO proposal to establish a network of United Nations agencies and non-United Nations organizations working on rural development and food security. Furthermore, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) had asked Governments to submit by 30 January 1998 at the latest a first report on the implementation of the Summit Plan of Action, covering the year 1997. He urged all countries to respond to the request by that Committee, which would also be reporting on inter-agency follow-up and coordination.

7. Much work lay ahead in honouring the commitments made at the Summit, but arrangements were in place to enable the international community to help countries ensure proper food for everyone.

8. **Mr. Kamando** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the success of the World Food Summit was testimony to the fact that all countries were committed to combating hunger and poverty and reducing by half the number of undernourished people by 2015 at the latest. The international community would have to redouble its efforts to achieve the objectives of the Summit. The implementation of the Summit Plan of Action would depend in large part on the resources and technology made available to rural people, particularly women. For rural women in developing

countries, the battle against hunger and undernourishment was indeed a battle for life. The elimination of hunger and poverty depended to a great extent on the capacity of countries, especially the developing countries, to utilize appropriate technologies. FAO was making welcome efforts at the filed level to utilize such technology to combat post-harvest losses, one of the major causes of food insecurity in many developing countries. Industrialized countries should support the efforts of FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP).

9. Guaranteeing food security did not mean simply growing more food: every person must be given access to sufficient food. Hunger was a powerful obstacle to the economic and social development of many developing countries. For development to be meaningful in those countries, the international community must meet the challenge of hunger immediately, for it caused irreversible damage. Malnourished women gave birth to babies whose start in life was already compromised. Women were essential to the struggle against poverty because they were the key to food security in the home: resources for women were resources for food security.

10. **Mr. Meyer** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the World Food Summit had been an opportunity to take a new approach to food security issues. The multidimensional approach that had been decided for the follow-up to the Summit required that action be taken at the national, intergovernmental and inter-agency levels. The European Union believed that Governments bore primary responsibility for the follow-up to the Summit, promoting food security and implementing development policies which would achieve a more equitable distribution of resources. Only in a peaceful, strong and stable political, social and economic climate, would States be able to develop effective food security and poverty eradication policies.

11. Women's role in food supply should not be underestimated. If food security was to be guaranteed, it was vital that women should participate in decision-making and have access, on an equal footing with men, to land, credit and inheritance rights. The European Union opposed all forms of discrimination against girls in the distribution of food resources.

12. At the international level, his delegation supported the Rome Declaration's appeal for Governments to commit to active cooperation both with other Governments and with United Nations bodies, financial institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the public and private sectors, in order to devise programmes which would guarantee food security for all. The European Union would consider the impact of its Common Agricultural Policy review on developing countries, paying greater attention to their position on the international food market and to the issue of food security.

13. It was vital that the follow-up to the Summit be integrated into the activities of all relevant United Nations bodies. While the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) played a prominent role in that regard, food security was an inter-sectoral problem that affected the entire United Nations system and required a coherent approach.

14. The European Union had celebrated World Food Day, for which the theme for 1997 had been "Investment in food security". Simple transfers of capital or technology were not enough: investments should be directed to improving health care and primary education, particularly for girls, involving the poor in development planning programmes and ensuring more equitable distribution of resources.

15. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) commended the work that had been done to strengthen inter-agency coordination within the United Nations for the implementation of the World Food Summit's Plan of Action and welcomed the Secretary-General's conclusions in paragraph 42 of his note on the outcome of the Summit (A/52/132). He was not convinced, however, that real progress had been made since Rome, and would have preferred to see a document listing specific measures to be taken to implement the Summit's decisions. As it was, delegations could only make banal statements about the importance of that event or comment on the Secretary-General's report.

16. The Russian Federation wished to know whether the arrangements for the inter-agency follow-up to the Summit had borne fruit and whether the reports had been presented to the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) through the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD). It also wanted to know whether consultations had taken place, under the aegis of FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), concerning arrangements for establishing the follow-up mechanism and for drawing up the initial work plan with other United Nations partners, as recommended by ACC. His delegation would like to receive information from the Secretariat concerning support for national action by thematic groups within the Resident

Coordinator system, working in collaboration with national Governments and other partners, including non-governmental organizations. Finally, it wished to know whether the system of electronic communication, with on-line reporting of periodic progress reports, was working well.

17. The Russian Federation hoped that the ACC report to the 1998 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council would provide food for thought and contribute to the debate on the follow-up to the World Food Summit.

18. **Monsignor Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that food and sustainable agricultural development were vital to resolving the problem of hunger in the world, one of the most specific problems that daily faced the poor and the marginalized. Studies confirmed that there was enough food in the world to satisfy everyone's needs and that quantity was not the issue. The real causes of hunger were varied and were associated with economic and political policies. As had been noted by the World Bank, food security was closely linked to poverty: nutritional elements were available, but were not within the reach of the poor. Distorted agricultural policies had created enormous disparities in the prices of raw materials and foodstuffs. Moreover, heavily indebted developing countries were no longer afforded access to credit for the technology needed to improve food production.

19. From the political point of view, hunger had become a tool of oppression in the twentieth century, and war had been the cause of "the only cases of widespread famine in recent years". An example of that phenomenon was when warring factions blocked humanitarian aid, including the distribution of food to civilians. Hunger could also be caused by massive expenditure on armaments and, in the aftermath of war, by the presence of landmines, which made it impossible to resume normal agricultural production. His delegation wished to highlight the impact of politically motivated sanctions: directed, in principle against regimes deemed to threaten international security, the effects of sanctions were frequently felt most keenly by the very poorest, particularly women and children.

20. The effects of natural disasters and bad weather on agricultural production notwithstanding, hunger and the lack of sustainable agricultural development were not solely the result of chance but rather of human choices and poor decisions. The contribution of sustainable agricultural development to resolving the problem of hunger was undeniable. Investment in education, basic health and other services could provide means of producing more food; ways should also be found to increase access to local agricultural markets and credit, improve vocational training and facilitate the transport and marketing of crops and livestock. It was not just a matter of increasing yields, but of heeding a call for solidarity and justice; it was a matter of combating the poverty and hunger that were offences against human dignity and, in a spirit of brotherhood, ensuring a more equitable sharing of resources, as Pope John Paul II had said in his message to the World Food Summit.

21. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Agriculture was the most important sector of the Guyanese economy; in fact, it was the largest source of earnings and employment. The Government of Guyana therefore attached great importance to the outcome of the World Food Summit. Hunger and malnutrition were unacceptable; the objective of food security for all consisted not only in producing enough food but in ensuring that everyone had access to it. In the Rome Declaration, the participants had pledged themselves to achieving food security for all, aiming in the first instance to halve the number of undernourished people by 2015. While the primary responsibility for translating that pledge into specific actions lay with Governments, their efforts would fail in the absence of an enabling international environment and the cooperation of the international community. That was particularly the case for small States such as Guyana, the least developed countries and many African countries. The recent phenomena of globalization and trade liberalization put those countries at risk of exclusion from the global economy and threatened to stand in the way of their achieving food security. The international community and the United Nations system must therefore continue to pay attention to those issues and also to the problems of external debt, growing poverty and declining resources for development, for agricultural development in particular.

22. **Mr. Svetogorsky** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) member and associated States, said that the issue of food security was of great concern. Over the previous 30 years there had been a slow-down in the growth of world agricultural production, with adverse effects for countries where agriculture was an important source of jobs, economic growth and export revenues. The MERCOSUR member and associated States were trying to achieve sustainable agricultural development while maintaining the necessary balance between development and environmental protection. Population growth demanded that efficiency in the production of goods and services be increased without harming the environment. Agricultural development was vital in order to ensure

adequate production of foodstuffs and at the same time reduce poverty. The MERCOSUR member States had created an enabling and stable business and macroeconomic environment for food security and sustainable development, thus promoting economic growth and export competitiveness. However, if the restructuring they had carried out was to bear fruit, the developed countries would have to open up their markets to goods and services from the developing countries and show more discipline in their use of official assistance, countervailing duties and anti-dumping measures in order to avoid protectionist trends that would reduce the effects of trade liberalization.

23. Agricultural development, particularly increases in production, lowered consumer prices and increased national income. Technology also had a role to play because scientific and technological progress made it possible to increase agricultural productivity and yield. The MERCOSUR member States, together with the Cairns Group, had come out in favour of liberalizing trade in agricultural products and eliminating the distortions that persisted in the agricultural sector; they also insisted on the need to ensure that the commitments entered into under the Uruguay Round were fulfilled and to ensure also that article 20 of the World Trade Organization Agreement on Agriculture, whereby multilateral negotiations would be held in late 1999, was implemented. The principal objectives were to improve access conditions to various markets, to amend the Agreement on Agriculture — in particular, transitional measures — and, generally, to liberalize agricultural trade and eliminate protectionist barriers, thus contributing to the necessary global food security.

24. **Ms. Cui Ying** (China) said that the 186 countries that had taken part in the Rome Summit had reaffirmed their commitment to eliminating hunger and malnutrition and to ensuring food security for everyone. To do so, the international community had agreed to give top priority to sustainable agricultural development and food; to eliminate the harmful effects of the liberalization of trade in agricultural products; and to strengthen international cooperation. The Chinese Government had always attached great importance to issues of agriculture and food. Agriculture was the foundation for national economic development, and China was seeking to rely exclusively on its own resources to achieve basic food self-sufficiency. The agricultural development policies adopted not long before by the Chinese Communist Party at its fifteenth national congress sought to deepen rural reform, ensure agricultural and rural development, improve agricultural infrastructure, use science and education to promote agricultural development and advance the process of agriculture's specialization, modernization and market orientation.

25. However, the People's Republic of China was confronting acute ecological problems such as a shortage of arable land and water resources, soil erosion and water pollution. The Government had therefore formulated its own "Agenda 21", its goal for the twenty-first century being to achieve agricultural modernization based on sustainability. Despite tremendous population pressure, shrinking arable land area, insufficient resource inputs and technological backwardness, China would do everything in its power to achieve the goals it had set itself, not only to meet the needs of its own economic and social development but also to help eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide.

26. **Mr. Ba** (Senegal) said that as the twentieth century drew to a close some countries continued to waste or even destroy food, while over 800 million people around the world did not have enough to eat. Hunger was a problem not just of production but also of distribution. At the World Food Summit, which had underlined the urgent need to prepare a global strategy to ensure food security, the international community had made a commitment to eliminate hunger and, as a first step, to halve the malnutrition rate by the year 2015. The Summit Plan of Action should be implemented at the national level by creating a favourable political, economic and social environment, giving priority to access to credit, empowerment for women, education and social justice. National efforts would, however, be inadequate if they were not complemented by a global partnership. The contribution of the developed countries to that partnership should not be confined to food donations but should aim at alleviating the debt burden, ensuring fair commodity prices, restoring official development assistance and abolishing protectionist trade practices.

27. He congratulated FAO on the reforms that it had undertaken to strengthen its operational capacities in the field by rationalizing its procedures, decentralizing resources and reducing administrative expenditure. He also welcomed both the "TeleFood" initiative, under which some 60 television channels around the world had drawn attention to food problems, and the World Bank initiative to promote rural development.

28. The agricultural sector was top priority of Senegal's ninth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (1996-2001), which, in the context of greater administrative decentralization, was centred around the creation of an environment conducive to private investment, support for new technologies, development of the rural infrastructure,

greater access to agricultural credit and the liberalization of production procedures. The agricultural sector was thus central to the strategy to combat poverty and stimulate strong economic growth for sustainable human development.

29. **Mr. Alnwick** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that malnutrition remained an impediment to development not only in countries affected by emergencies but throughout the world. It violated the human rights of nearly one sixth of the world's population and caused the death of up to 6 million children a year. Micronutrient malnutrition undermined the health and intelligence of millions of other people. A recent International Food Policy Research Institute report had drawn attention to the prospects of a widening food gap in developing countries, and there was renewed concern about food security in a world where one third of all children were malnourished. Efforts should be made to understand the real meaning of food security and its role in the bid to eliminate malnutrition, particularly within the family.

30. The main burden of responsibility for food security fell on women, who took on the whole range of tasks associated with it, from cultivating food to preparing it. It was also up to them to ensure that children had access to food, health care and household sanitation. Moreover, their nutritional status was largely the foundation of nutrition for their children; an undernourished mother perpetuated the tragic cycle of physical vulnerability. In the fight against malnutrition, improved agricultural technology or trade was not enough: strategies for improving food production and distribution should be linked with measures to provide access to health, water and sanitation for families, in which women were the key players at every level.

31. Although considerable progress had been made towards achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children, there had been little or none in reducing child malnutrition. To tackle the problem effectively there was a need for more integrated development strategies, broader partnerships and the social and economic empowerment of the poor. UNICEF intended to continue to pursue the goal of halving child malnutrition by the year 2000; to work to improve women's health and nutrition before and during pregnancy and lactation; to continue to advocate the ratification and enforcement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; to strengthen efforts to promote breastfeeding, particularly by encouraging adherence to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes; and to include indicators of women's and children's social, economic and health status in the development of the food insecurity information systems that were being developed following the World Food Summit.

32. By the same token, the focus of *The State of the World's Children 1997* would be nutrition. Through its country programmes UNICEF also contributed to the implementation of the Summit Plan of Action, which emphasized the special role of women, the importance of breastfeeding and the need to give priority to children, especially the girl child.

33. **Mr. Graisse** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the World Food Summit had been a seminal event for WFP, which was actively involved in implementing the Summit Plan of Action in cooperation with FAO.

34. In preparing for the Summit, WFP had consistently emphasized the need to reach the poorest communities and households. Several major themes had been emphasized: first, it had been made clear that the debate on food security should take account of the human dimension, not just efforts to grow more food, since hunger was a cause and not only an effect of poverty. Hunger must be eradicated without delay, since each undernourished generation compromised the future of the next generation. Another theme was that women were a key part of any strategy to combat malnutrition because of their responsibilities for food security. The liberalization of markets after the Uruguay Round offered much promise, but the international community should also take into account the potential effects the Marrakesh decision on mitigation of the possible negative effects of the Uruguay Round might have on food security in developing countries in years to come. WFP had also reaffirmed that there could be no food security without peace; regions suffering from political instability were most acutely affected by famine.

35. WFP activities were closely related to the seven commitments in the Plan of Action and to nearly half of the Plan's objectives. There were three areas in which WFP was particularly active. Firstly, it was striving to link its emergency relief activities with the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase that followed. Secondly, in line with the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Food Summit, it was focusing on supporting women, especially in emergencies. Lastly, it was committed to devoting at least 90 per cent of its development resources to low-income food-deficit countries and at least 50 per cent to the least developed countries.

36. **Mr. Zari Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran) associated himself with the statement made by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and said that food security and sustainable

agricultural development were issues of vital importance for many developing countries. Agriculture was still one of the main sources of income for the population of those countries. It also helped to create jobs and combat poverty. As pointed out in the Agenda for Development, agricultural policies could achieve excellent results if they were aimed at increasing food production, making more resources available and repositioning agriculture in the general framework of economic development.

37. The international community, for its part, must support agricultural policies by helping small and medium-sized agro-industries and cooperatives, which were enjoying a real boom in the developing countries, and by improving the processing, transportation, distribution and marketing of foodstuffs and other agricultural products. However, such support should not be limited to the provision of financial resources or the transfer of technology and technical know-how. Rather, the international community must help to create a favourable environment, particularly by liberalizing market access for agricultural products from the developing countries. While domestic policies played a critical role, they could only be successful in a favourable international environment.

38. The two main factors required for agricultural development were arable land and fresh water. Those two resources alone were not enough, however: they had to be efficiently managed if productivity was to be increased. Otherwise, land degradation, lower soil fertility and desertification could take a heavy toll on agriculture, especially in the developing countries. Drought and lack of fresh water were two other recurring phenomena in those countries, entailing considerable economic costs in terms of lost production, wasted inputs and delays in development. The provision of fresh water should be one of the major components of any programme of action, as a steady increase in world food production, based on high-yield crops and the use of fertilizer and pest controls, was dependent on irrigation. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide sufficient water for agricultural activities, particularly in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Virtually all countries with mainly arid territory were net food importers, and food security for them was closely linked to the soundness of their trading position and hard currency reserves. Those countries needed to use the best agricultural methods and techniques, including management techniques, in a sector which was becoming increasingly technology-intensive, and thus expensive. It was the international community's responsibility to offer strong support in the form of capital flows and transfers of technology and know-how.

39. The World Food Summit had been a collective initiative to combat widespread malnutrition and undernourishment throughout the world by drawing up a plan to eliminate hunger and ensure food security for all, in the name of every human being's right to be adequately fed.

40. The solemn pledges by the international community and United Nations bodies to achieve that end must be translated into an expression of firm political will. Effective coordination should be ensured within the United Nations system and with other bodies such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the secretariats of the major conventions on desertification, biological diversity and climate change, in order to avoid a duplication of activities and to use both financial and human resources more effectively.

41. **Mr. Kvalheim** (Norway) said that the Governments participating in the World Food Summit had clearly affirmed that access to safe and nutritious food was a fundamental right. Although food production had increased more rapidly than the world population in recent decades, the number of undernourished people had not fallen. Poverty was the main cause of food insecurity and should be given high priority in efforts to reduce malnutrition. The issue of food security should therefore be placed within a broader framework, with attention paid also to such issues as household access to productive resources, gender equality, land reform and the environment.

42. The Plan of Action stressed that the main focus of action should be at the country level and that the role of the international community was to offer encouragement and support by increasing cooperation and coordination in order to enhance effectiveness. While FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had major roles to play in the follow-up to the Summit, all other agencies working in that area should also cooperate in that task, under the leadership of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. He welcomed in particular the contribution which the United Nations resident coordinators and the establishment of thematic groups with the participation of national Governments and their external and internal partners, including non-governmental organizations, were making to activities in the field, thereby putting into practice the participatory process long advocated by his Government. The Secretary-General's reform proposals, contained in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), should also be taken into account.

43. The implementation and follow-up of the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit should be seen in the context of the series of major conferences held in the 1990s, particularly those on desertification and biodiversity. As the

follow-up to all those conferences imposed a heavy burden on many countries and agencies, reporting procedures must be simplified; the success of the Summit would ultimately depend on the effectiveness of measures taken at the national and international levels by all concerned.

44. **Mr. Weibgen** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that he would pass on to the Director-General of FAO, who had unfortunately been unable to attend the meeting, all the comments made during the debate on the item, particularly the very pertinent questions raised by the representative of the Russian Federation, who would receive the necessary answers through bilateral channels. The FAO Council would also be kept abreast of new developments since the Summit, and the results of its work would also be transmitted to the Second Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.